

Commercial and Industrial Buildings,
McFadden Coffee and Spice Company
Factory and Warehouse
145 First Street
Dubuque
Dubuque County
Iowa

HABS No. IA-160-H

HABS
IOWA,
31-DUBU,
13-H-

DRAWINGS

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

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Site Location:

145 First Street
Dubuque, Dubuque County, Iowa
DOT designation: Resource Site No. 7.2
Cadastral grid : SE1/4 NE1/4 S25 T89N R3E
USGS quadrangle: Dubuque South Iowa 7.5'
UTM coordinates: 15.692030.4707230
Lot dimensions : 47'x 130' : .14 acre
68'x 112' : .17 acre
Lot description: City Lot 198A and
Lot 1 of City Lots 529 and 530.

Present Owner:

Iowa Department of Transportation

Present Usage:

retail auto parts store; tire warehouse

Present Condition :

good / fair

Overall Dimensions: 120'x 50', four stories; additions - one story, 33'x 81';
two silos, 18' wide x 40' tall

Orientation :

south

Architectural

Plan type : rectangular open-plan warehouse, divided into
two main sections, with center elevator/stair
tower.

Description :

Foundation: reinforced concrete perimeter walls.

Structure : concrete column-and-slab system with brick
masonry perimeter bearing walls.

Ext. walls: face brick laid in common bond.

Roof : flat composition roof with brick parapets and
terra cotta copings.

Chimneys : none

Windows : painted wood 4/4 double hung with loose lintels
throughout; 4th floor windows with a continuous
terra cotta block sill except on rear, all
others have terra cotta block lug sills; rear
windows also have a different light configura-
tion - 3/3 vertical lights, double hung; all
windows have plain wood casings.

Openings : double-leaf front entrance inset with molded
brick reveal in southeast corner; doorway with
large fixed-sash transom headed by brick seg-
mental arch and enframed by bracketed, arched,
neoclassical terra cotta pediment; east side
with (new) double-leaf aluminum door with tran-
som; sectional garage doors at loading docks on

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rear of east side and along west wall, some with cantilevered wood canopies overhead.

Porches : full-length concrete loading dock on east side; two short flights of concrete steps with plain steel pipe railings lead to the double doors.

Details : moderately corbeled brick courses and terra cotta block cornice at roofline and string course between 1st and 2nd floor windows; terra cotta string course that forms continuous sill for 3rd floor windows.

Construction Date : 1910

Architecture Style: 20th Century Functional

Physical History : In November 1908 the McFadden Coffee and Spice Company purchased this property on the corner of First and Iowa streets from Elizabeth Manson for \$8,000. The firm held the property - the former site of the Pacific House Hotel - for over a year without developing it. Then, in January 1910 the McFaddens formed the McFadden Building Company and transferred ownership of the land to the new corporation. That year they built this immense brick factory and warehouse for their expanding food importing and milling business. Reportedly costing \$50,000, the building featured fireproof concrete construction, with an automatic sprinkler system throughout, and was divided into two main four-story sections by a fire-walled center elevator and stair tower. The first floor front of the building housed the business offices and a shipping room. The second floor above was used for packing, the third for coffee and spice milling, and roasting occurred on the fourth floor. In the rear half, the first floor was used for shipping and the upper floors were used as a warehouse. McFadden operated successfully from this building for three decades. In the face of heavy competition in 1941, however, then owner Robert McKay closed the business. Two years later the Heuchelin-Hanker Company, a grain milling firm, purchased the building and that year erected a garage on the property for almost \$16,000. Soon renamed the Rooster Mills Company, this company owned the structure until 1972, when it was sold to Ralph J. Digman. In 1984 the Iowa Department of Transportation acquired the property in preparation for construction of a proposed highway.

Significance: James and Edward McFadden formed the McFadden Brothers Grocery and Provisions Store in 1884 on the southwest corner of Fifth and Main streets. Two years later, in August 1886, they dissolved the partnership and formed the McFadden Coffee and Spice Company with Joseph McFadden and John A. McKinlay to import, manufacture and import coffee, ground spices, coconut, chocolate, hops, soap and baking powder. After an initial period of hardship, the company began a period of continuous expansion that would culminate with the construction of this structure. With its office and plant in the Bush Building on Main Street [HABS No. IA-160-BG], the firm took over one of its competitors, the coffee and spice business of J.P. Farley, in 1890 and hired

more salesmen. McFadden shortly thereafter added tea to its product line and took over the plant of the Pritchard Buggy Top Company [HABS No. IA-160-BH]. As the McFadden company expanded its sales rapidly throughout Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota and the Dakotas during the 1890s, the firm moved into the double store of the defunct Mitchell Transfer House and then occupied three more buildings. In December 1902 the McFadden Coffee and Spice Company was incorporated with a capitalization of \$100,000. With James McFadden as president and Joseph McFadden as secretary, the firm was finally able to consolidate its operations on October 1, 1910, when it moved into this immense factory and warehouse - "a model of perfection", according to a 1911 Dubuque business gazetteer. Built at a time in which reinforced concrete frame construction for buildings was beginning to gain rapidly in popularity, the McFadden Factory and Warehouse is architecturally significant as a novel and innovative foray into the new use of a material: one of Dubuque's earliest truly fireproof buildings. It is historically significant for its association with the McFadden Coffee and Spice Company, a successful representative of one of the city's secondary industries.

References:

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Iowa State Gazetteer and Business Directory: 1882-1923.
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H.W. Gardner, *Greater Dubuque* (Dubuque: The Times Journal, 1911), page 56.
The Industries of Dubuque: Her Relations as a Trade Center, Business Houses and Manufacturing Establishments (Dubuque: J.M. Elstner and Company, 1887), page 68.
Descriptive Survey of Dubuque (Dubuque: Dubuque Chamber of Commerce, 1911).
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